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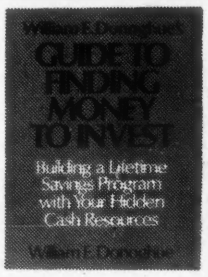
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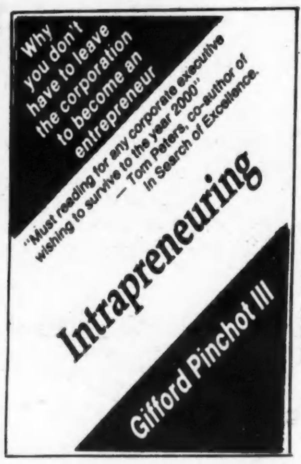
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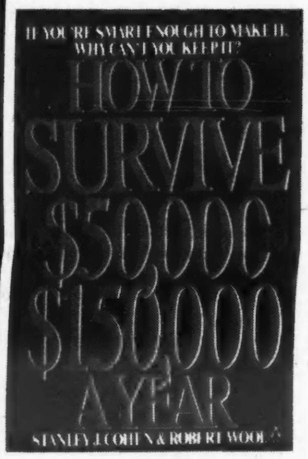
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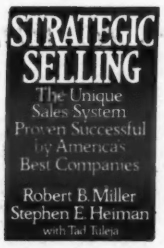
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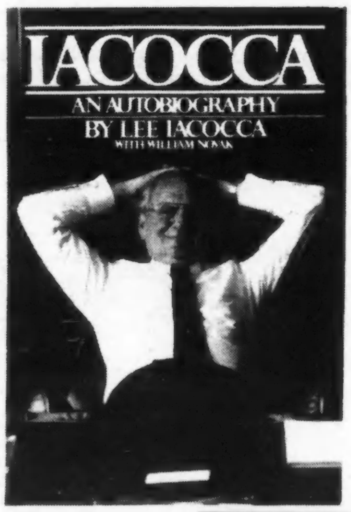
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Have Newts Got a Soul?

My friend, Rev. H. B. Bertam, and I watched the Salamanders for a lengthy time while they were constructing the dam at Aden; we also spoke with them two or three times, but we did not discover in them any sense of higher values like Honour, Faith, Patriotism, or Foul Play. And what else with any justification can be called soul?—Colonel John W. Britton

I have never seen a Newt; but I am convinced that creatures who have no music have no soul.—Toscanini

They certainly haven't got a soul. In this they agree with man.—G.B. Shaw

May they be salamanders, if only no Marxists.—Kurt Huber

They have no sex-appeal. And therefore they have no soul.—Mae West

They have a soul like every other creature, and every plant has one, as does everything that lives. Great is the mystery of life.—Sandrabharata Nath

War with the Newts
Karel Capek
Introduction by Ivan Klima

After we had worked out the skeletons of the dead animals we came across a most striking fact; that is, that the skeleton of these salamanders tallies almost perfectly with the fossil imprint of a salamander skeleton which Dr. Johannes Jakub Scheuchzer discovered on a piece of stone from the Oeningen quarry, and described in his work *Homo Diluvii Testis* published in the year 1726. Permit us to remind readers not so well versed in the literature that the Dr. Scheuchzer mentioned above considered this fossil to be the remains of *antediluvian man.*

Written on the brink of World War Two, *War with the Newts* has been variously described as an anti-fascist or anti-communist tract. It is neither. Capek's newts represent simply the average man, the masses which provided the seedbed for the greatest works of European culture, but also produced the demonic imagination of Adolph Hitler. *War with the Newts* is a journey to the heart of this great paradox of twentieth-century history. Capek's wit, imagination and sheer lyrical playfulness combine in *War with the Newts* with his relentless exploration of the darkest possibilities of human behavior and political action.

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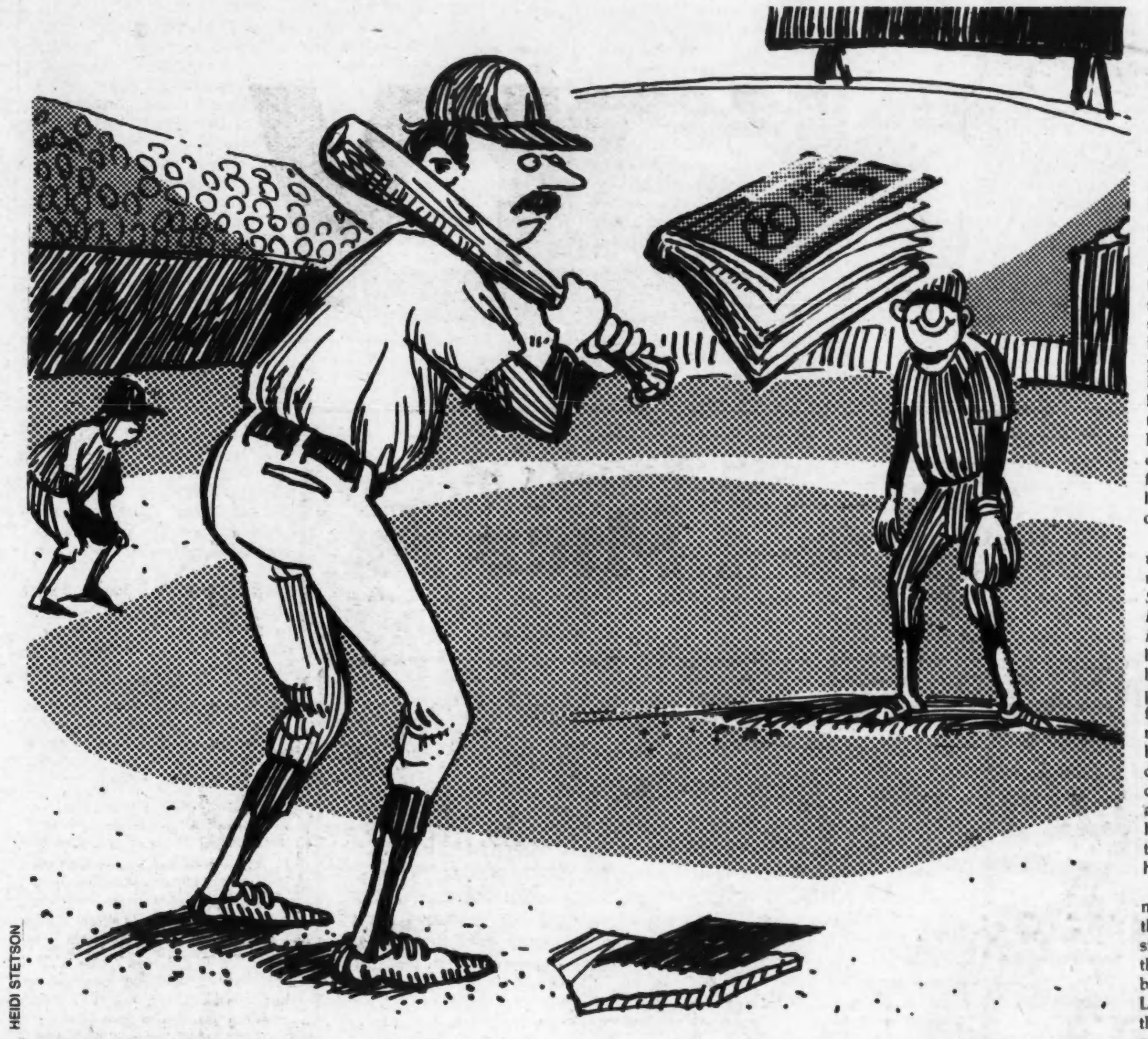
HEIDI STETSON

Triple play

Baseball from Gammons to James to Elias

by Howard Litwak

BEYOND THE SIXTH GAME: WHAT'S HAPPENED TO BASEBALL SINCE THE GREATEST GAME IN WORLD SERIES HISTORY, by Peter Gammons. Houghton Mifflin, 280 pages, $15.95.

THE BILL JAMES BASEBALL ABSTRACT. Ballantine, 308 pages, $7.95.

THE 1985 ELIAS BASEBALL ANALYST, by Seymour Siwoff, Steve Hirdt, and Peter Hirdt. Collier, 407 pages, $12.95.

Peter Gammons was at his best in the *Boston Globe*'s April 5 preseason baseball special, "The Latin American Influence." In his five-page survey, staff ace Gammons profiled key individuals, named all-star teams of Cuban, Venezuelan, Puerto Rican, and Dominican extraction, described the Dominican "baseball city" of San Pedro, examined immigration laws and their effect on the number of Latin American ballplayers, and produced engagingly anecdotal sidebars on the real (as opposed to reported) ages of Latin ballplayers and the history of one-handed play at shortstop. Probably no other daily baseball writer would undertake such an imposing assignment; certainly no other daily newspaper would devote so many column inches to the subject. It was, in other words, the kind of tour de force that makes Gammons the country's best baseball beat reporter and justifies the (reported) six-figure salary he earns.

When it comes to explaining the effect of personality on performance, or describing the chemistry of a locker room or a front office, or living and dying with a team's hot and cold streaks, there's no one better. And though his closeness to the game's personalities makes his analysis suspect when it comes to his faves (Red Sox shortstop Glenn Hoffman, for one; St. Louis manager Whitey Herzog, for another) and more suspect still when it comes to his *bêtes noires* (future Hall of Famer Rickey Henderson seems to be overtaking future Hall of Famer Rod Carew in this category), it also enables Gammons to carry the *Globe* sports section seven months of the year and be a major contributor the other five. *Washington Post*'s baseball writer (and Gammons contemporary) Tom Boswell wrote several years ago, "For a sportswriter, Boston's the best audience going. No statistic is considered too obscure, no potential trade or signing too remote, no flight of poetic enthusiasm too purple." Not every writer gets the readers he deserves, but there's no doubt that Gammons has more than a little to do with creating this audience. Indeed, he is to his fellow fans what Bruce Springsteen is to his listeners — the perfect mirror of their best impulses.

Which unfortunately doesn't make him a book writer. His newly published *Beyond the Sixth Game: What's Happened to Baseball Since the Greatest Game in World Series History* has many highly readable passages and a handful of juicy personality portraits; for the hardy Red Sox fan, it constitutes a good summer read. But frankly, the thing is no book at all. And it's exactly the qualities that make Gammons's daily and weekly columns so addictive — his love of anecdote, his discursive style, his uncontrolled enthusiasms — that make his book so shapeless.

We'll put aside, for the moment, the Red Sox chauvinism that leads Gammons to call the sixth game of the '75 World Series the greatest Series game ever. At best, it rates third, behind Don Larsen's 1956 perfect game and the utterly thrilling 10-9 seventh-game upset that gave the Pittsburgh Pirates their victory over the New York Yankees in 1960. Still, that's just a hook for the title — and what the hell, it sure was one great ballgame. No, the problem is the subtitle's other claim, the idea that the Bosox are representative of what's happened in baseball since free agency began, in 1976. The problem is, the changes that Peter thinks have occurred haven't, really. Or rather, they have, but not with the tragic effects he describes.

In the past decade, the major changes in baseball (and Gammons the beat man knows, and reports, this as well as anyone) have to do with the dilution of the game's talent pool by expansion, the decline of the complete game and the concurrent

Continued on page 4

And in other action . . .

by Michael Gee

Publishers just can't find the handle on the baseball calendar. Each spring, their lists are peppered with diamond books, fiction and nonfiction, all carefully scheduled to hit the stores around Opening Day. But on Opening Day, the baseball fan is more interested in following the games of the present than in reading about seasons and players past or never-were. The latest work of a Roger Angell takes second place to the latest box score from the Coast. Face it: books with a baseball theme ought to be released in the winter, when fans of the game have nothing to do but read them. That way, they could avoid the fate of four new releases, all of which, I fear, are destined to be lost in the shuffle of the new season. It's a fate they don't entirely deserve, for if each book is flawed, all are more engrossing than, say, an NHL regular-season game.

Daniel Okrent's *Nine Innings* (Ticknor & Fields, 272 pages, $16.95) is an ambitious work. Its author proposes to examine the entire nature of baseball today in the replaying (punctuated by many a digression) of a single June 10, 1982, ballgame between the Milwaukee Brewers and the Baltimore Orioles. Okrent, the editor of *New England Monthly*, is a knowledgeable baseball fan and a solid if overserious prose stylist; the problem is that the conceit on which his book is based simply doesn't work. One cannot have a micro- and a macrocosm occupying the same space simultaneously. If Okrent had stuck to presenting an extended game story, he might have enjoyed an unqualified success, for the chunks of *Nine Innings* devoted to baseball on the field are informative, and in some cases — such as his account of a late-inning, men-on confrontation between Rollie Fingers and Eddie Murray — offer genuine drama as well. But it's irksome to be yanked away from a perfectly good game (Milwaukee comes back in the bottom of the eighth to win, 9-7) for a rehash of the Brewers' activities at the 1981 winter meetings, or for yet another account of the creation of free agency and the players' strike of '81, or for bloviations about the relationship of players and media. These off-field sagas fascinate Okrent. Unfortunately, they are subjects on which the baseball follower is, if anything, overinformed, and Okrent has nothing new to contribute by way of fact or analysis. He should have stuck to describing what happened that June afternoon. He's a better than fair game-story writer, and the recounting of an individual game is still the highest form of baseball literature.

Baseball fiction has always suffered because the game itself is a fiction, a make-believe world that resembles real life only in that the end isn't known beforehand. Too much baseball reality in a baseball fiction and the story tends to die of boredom; too much pure fancy, and the story breaks down and away from the reader, as if the author had put too much hifalutin spin on his delivery. Both David Carkeet, in his novel *The Greatest Slump of All Time* (Penguin Contemporary American Fiction Series, 232 pages, $5.95 paper), and W.P. Kinsella, in his short-story collection *The Thrill of the Grass* (Penguin Original, 196 pages, $4.95 paper), wrestle manfully with this literary dilemma, but only Kinsella can claim at least a draw.

Carkeet's mythical team, a collection of life's misfits, wins the World Series. The title's irony (and the point of the book) is that it does so while going through a slump — not a baseball slump, but every neurosis and psychosis known to post-Freudian man, until one of their number kills himself and the rest realize that, well, caring for one another is what makes life tolerable, not baseball success. The pretentious yet simple-minded story line is the book's gaping weakness; its (almost) redeeming strengths are the author's way with words and his appreciation of the essential nuttiness of baseball humor — as when the terminally shy virgin pitcher throws his teeth in the way of a line drive so he can re-encounter the dental assistant with who he was smitten at an earlier cleaning, or in the character of Jaime van der Pijpers, a Dutch-Cuban outfielder unintelligible in three different languages (he makes Chico Esquela sound like Winston Churchill). But Carkeet's overt rooting for sanity over victory makes for a far less interesting study of human character than, say, the career of Billy Martin.

Kinsella's stories all take in baseball, but sometimes only tangentially, as in "Barefoot and Pregnant in Des Moines," which chronicles the drifting apart of a married couple, one member of whom happens to be a baseball player. Kinsella has a good ear for baseball talk and an excellent sense of the low-rent culture of the low minors, and he's the first author I've read who has even a clue about the unique sexual attitudes that are part of clubhouse culture. When he combines these in "The Firefighter," whose title character is an Okie

Continued on page 5

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Gammons

Continued from page 3

rise of the complete bullpen, the spread of artificial turf and the consequent emphasis on speed, the rethinking of the role of the number-two hitter in the line-up that, in the American League, has been the ultimate result of the introduction of the designated hitter — that sort of thing. In the business of baseball, all that's changed is that players are paid more and management's mistakes are more expensive. This is amply demonstrated in Appendix A, with its listing of Red Sox salaries for 1975, '79, and '84. (Assuming, by the way, that these are correct numbers, we learn from this survey that the indispensable shortstop of the '75 champs, Rick Burleson, was paid less than the likes of reserve catcher Bob Montgomery, declining second baseman Doug Griffin, reserve outfielder Bernie Carbo — himself paid three times what starting outfielders Fred Lynn and Jim Rice received — and mid-season pick-up second baseman Denny Doyle. In other words, there were ludicrous baseball salaries before free agency started increasing the number of zeroes after the primary digits.) Otherwise, free agency has made no difference in baseball, except to make the process by which management assembles a team more complex. Dumb, underfinanced management (and yes, you may read the Sullivan/Leroux Sox as an example) will not win today, any more than it did before free agency. Smart, moneyed management (yes, you may read the first half of George Steinbrenner's Reign of Terror) can win today, just as it always could (see the Yanks of old, mid-'20s to mid-'60s). And otherwise, as in most things, it's better to be smart than dumb, better to be rich than poor, and it still ain't over till it's over.

Early on, Gammons tries to set the stage for his argument by claiming that "personnel moves . . . are [today] dictated as much by contract as by talent." This seems to be a clear case of the reporter's being too close to his front-office sources. An executive who resorts to that complaint is just covering for his mistakes in evaluating talent — the only mistakes that matter in this business, before or after free agency. Contrast Gammons's view with that expressed by a very-old-line owner, Calvin Griffith (formerly of the Minnesota Twins), who told him, "Let's face it, people in my situation have always considered the Red Sox the team that screwed things up for everyone else, the way they pay."

Baseball, gentlemen, baseball. This, and not a fascination with salary numbers, a dissection of conceptual flaws, is how *Beyond the Sixth Game* should be evaluated. For Red Sox fans, this work, with its reliving of the past 10 seasons, its litany of "what if?" and in-group references (what in the world was the Mike Higgins "Sound and the Fury" regime?), its labored analyses of the soul of New England as exemplified in the Olde Towne Team, is certainly a must-read, even if the assiduous among us will recognize some of the most memorable material. The years of '75 through '78 were certainly glorious vintages for baseball in this town, and Gammons brings it all back: the night the Looie cheer originated for Tiant (a game I'm proud to say I attended); Zimmer and the talk shows; that 1978 moment of pure baseball hubris when rookie outfielder Garry Hancock, just up from Pawtucket, was given a standing ovation for his first major-league at-bat (another game I'm proud I attended). And the dour years of '79 through '83 are appropriately treated: the collapse of the pitching, the impossible front office. No one covered Dwight Evans's emergence as a total star better than Gammons, and his portrayals of that old buzzard Yaz and the oft-criticized Ralph Houk will endure. To the non-Sox fan, *Beyond the Sixth Game* is, if nothing else, a fascinating work of cultural anthropology, a tour of the spiritual terrain of Fenway Park and environs that's decisive proof the word "fan" derives from "fanatic."

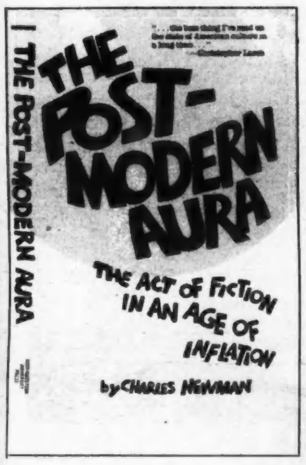
* * *

It's a cliché, but one does indeed recognize the hardcore Sox fan by his catalogue of woes (why'd they hit for Willoughby?). Just as surely, one recognizes the Bill James fan by his catalogue of odd phrases: runs created, range factor, the Johnson effect, approximate value. And just as the hardcore Sox fan remembers with nostalgic fondness the horrific days of the early '60s, when Yaz and the imposing relief pitcher Dick Radatz were the only players of approximate value on the team, the regular James fan remembers fondly the old days when he was our little secret, his annual *Abstract* a hand-stitched affair that numbered its sales somewhere between Steve Carlton's career victories and Hank Aaron's career home runs. It was a simpler thing, then, like baseball contracts before free agency, and if "success hasn't spoiled Bill James," as the back cover of the elaborate, professionally produced 1985 affair reads, it's transformed him from the first sunny game of April to a grind-it-out night game in mid-July.

Bill James is a Kansas-based baseball writer, and a good one, who regards himself as a kind of Thinking Machine of baseball analysis. There's been a tremendous amount of work done in the statistical analysis of baseball in the past decade, and James is one of the most adept practitioners of this new social science, known as sabermetrics to its devotees. Every year, James produces a *Baseball Abstract* that provides knowledgeable, pungent, often hilarious team-by-team commentary and analyses of individual players based in part on his beloved formulas, latest research, and odd fixations, and in part on his baseball intuition, which is pretty damned good (he doesn't make a big deal of it, but he predicted the Cubs' demi-pennant in the 1984 *Abstract* and was one of the first to spot the emerging talents of the likes of Dickie Thon and Ryne Sandberg).

Typical James comments read like this: "If you have nine hitters and nine batting-order slots to put them in there are 362,880

Tell them you saw it in THE BOSTON Phoenix



***The Post-Modern Aura: The Act of Fiction in an Age of Inflation* Charles Newman**

Charles Newman's *The Post-Modern Aura* is a highly original critique of the pretensions of the literary-cultural Avant-Garde in the United States today. It is also a critique of the current opposition to the Avant-Garde—neo-realists, academic humanists, and political conservatives. It is more than a negative critique, however, for in showing why these opposing positions are inadequate, Newman presents a persuasive analysis of what he describes as an Age of Inflation. It is the paradoxical dynamics of "inflation," a word Newman uses both as a narrowly economic and a broadly cultural concept, which neither traditionalists nor cultural revolutionaries have understood. Whatever their differences, both groups still believe the conflict between "tradition" and "radical" subversion is a live issue in contemporary American culture, whereas Newman argues that an inflationary culture makes it a pseudo-issue . . . the whole tenor of Newman's book is finally "progressive" in the best sense rather than pessimistic, fatalistic, or nostalgic. It is not a call for "moral fiction" or for the shoring up of cultural traditions or for "humanistic values." . . . Newman does not claim to have all the answers for the predicament of fiction today, but his inquiry figures to move the discussion of the problem in a more useful direction.

Gerald Graff from the Preface

"Charles Newman's *The Post-Modern Aura* is a real eye-opener; the best thing I've read on the state of American culture in a long time, and grounded, moreover, in a tough-minded analysis of the economics of publishing—something unheard of in the annals of literary criticism."

Christopher Lasch, author of *The Minimal Self*

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ways to do it, and only one of them is right." Or "Did [Oakland] get a fair price for Rickey Henderson? . . . The idea in building a championship team is to *acquire* players like Rickey Henderson. It's a sad day when you have to give one away." Or "We have this sixth sense, as baseball fans, that when we first become aware of a player, he has about 10 or 12 years to play. When we first hear a name, like Brook Jacoby or Mickey Tettleton or Willie Lozado or Dion James, an internal clock starts to tick, and we know that this player has maybe three or four years to prove that he is a major league player, and eight to 10 to play once that is done." Or this, the uncut text of his comment on Seattle catcher Bob Kearney: "Had 43 more RBI than Bill Caudill." If these short excerpts of James's prose don't persuade you that his company is worth keeping, you are definitely not interested in the kind of research that only James does on the national level: a history of beanball injuries; a survey of all teams in baseball history whose offensive statistics are similar to those of the 1984 Kansas City Royals except in number of walks (in a valiant effort to examine just how much value the base on balls has); a four-page response to the blue-ribbon Party to put Ken Keltner in Cooperstown (he rejects the Party's claim). In other words, Bill James is talking baseball; agree with him or not, he's a great conversationalist.

That said, I must confess to disappointment in this year's model. It's become a little rote. As James explains, he has spent a good measure of the past year working on the forthcoming *Historical Abstract*; consequently, he allows too many fellow sabermetricians to write individual team chapters while restricting himself to editorial comments. James spices his conversation with statistics; these other guys, on the whole, are true number nerds, the kind of narrow- (or simple-) minded folk that give real fans a bad name. There's also an overload of typos and other errors, like confusion over whether to treat Dave Winfield as a left fielder. (Does no one proofread anymore? Gammons has the same problem: the number of pitches Luis Tiant threw in his epic victory over the Reds in game five of the '75 series is reported once, correctly, as 163, and twice, incorrectly, as 172; the story of Lynn's admittedly phenomenal catch off Graig Nettles in early August 1975 is retailed in virtually identical language three times in the first 41 pages.)

If it's plain old numbers you want, the must-buy of the season is *The 1985 Elias Baseball Analyst*. It's unreadable in the ordinary sense — and that's a compliment. The *1985 Elias Baseball Analyst* belongs next to Macmillan's *Baseball Encyclopedia* on your bookshelf. The Elias Sports Bureau is the official statistician for the National League, the NFL, and the NBA. For years, the bureau has kept a variety of "secret" statistics on all players, things like month-by-month results, day/night results, lefty/righty results — oh, and those for performance home/away, turf/grass, bases empty/runners on, and, of greatest interest, in "late-inning pressure situations" (close games, seventh inning on). Since most teams now figure this stuff out for themselves, owner/president Seymour Siwoff and his executive vice-presidents, Steve and Peter Hirdt, decided to capitalize on the popularity of James and go public with their data. It was a brilliant idea, and the *Analyst* shows every likelihood of being this year's most quoted baseball book. The book comprises 407 pages, nearly all of them crammed with endlessly fascinating baseball statistics. There's only one problem: I took it with me to the bleachers on Patriots' Day and found it a powerful distraction. I was so busy double-checking Julio Cruz's astonishing average in late-inning pressure situations that I almost missed his 11th-inning game-winning single. ☐

Baseball

Continued from page 3

auto-parts thief and self-proclaimed oil-well firefighter, he produces a story that makes you laugh out loud, a slice of American life that Ring Lardner would have been proud to call his own. But Kinsella also has an imagination — too much imagination in some cases. Two of his stories are *Twilight Zone* scripts in disguise, and they have the facile trick endings of that series. A Latin baseball fantasy patterned after Gabriel García Márquez is not bad, exactly, but far too cute. And as is inevitable for anyone who writes about baseball for any length of time, Kinsella has several stories that muse on how baseball binds the generations, and the American dream and such; like all such musings, they are very tedious going. Still, Poet Laureate of the Rookie Leagues isn't a bad title for any writer.

Tom Boswell is no rookie; unlike the other authors in this particular line-up, he's a professional sports writer (for the *Washington Post*), and a highly capable one at that. *Time Begins on Opening Day* (Penguin Sports Library, 300 pages, $5.95 paper) is his second collection of essays on baseball seasons past (in this case, from 1981 through '83). Boswell has a sound technical knowledge of the game, but his real interest is the character of the men who play it, manage it, and (in one fine essay) umpire it. Sometimes his studies produce insightful and moving portraits of human beings in a peculiar, difficult profession — like his examination of the Ripken family (father and son are Orioles coach and star, respectively), or his profile of the brilliantly talented and famously quirky Orioles pitcher, Jim Palmer. But sometimes Boz gets a mite carried away; you find yourself saying, "C'mon, Tom, it was just another ballgame." Sutton versus Palmer for the pennant is not quite Achilles versus Hector in the Troy Invitational, nor should it be. In an attempt to justify the book's mock-serious title, Boswell gets altogether too serious about having fun. But when he relaxes with just plain baseball, writing about pinch-hitters or the various ways managers go nuts, both he and the reader have fun.

Four baseball books that won't be bought, because the potential readers will be too busy tuning in the Cubs and Braves on cable TV. Perhaps the publishers will wise up and re-release these tomes just after the Series and just before Christmas. Then they'll have a fair chance to take their cuts. ☐

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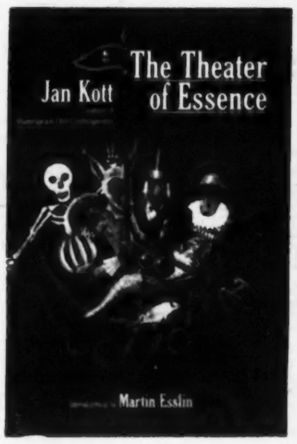

***The Theater of Essence and Other Essays* Jan Kott**
Introduction by Martin Esslin

"A literary humanist infatuated with live theater, a classicist absorbed with advanced dramatic forms, an ex-Marxist still dreaming revolutionary fantasies, Kott is something of an anomaly among contemporary scholars—aloof yet engaged, ironic and passionate, maintaining a neutral position in the battle of the ancients and the moderns . . . His accounts of Kantor's harrowing *The Dead Class* and *Wielopole* and of Peter Brook's *Carmen* . . . are splendid demonstrations of his capacity to surrender himself to what he considers "perfect" theatrical experiences . . . Significantly, Kott attacks Grotowski not for any artistic failing but rather for his relentless aestheticism and monasticism, and particularly for his religiosity . . . Kott is able to admire the heroic discipline of Grotowski . . . without abandoning himself to the uncritical awe it inspired in many critics during the Seventies . . . [Kott] is unequaled in his ability to explore the limits of theatrical achievement. Two of the essays in [Theater of Essence] are appreciations of Japanese theater, which is one of the strongest influences on current postmodern theatrical expression. His descriptions of Noh drama . . . and of Kabuki . . . could be applied not only to many contemporary productions of Brecht and Genet but also to some of the recent work of Robert Wilson, Joanne Akalaitis, Andrei Serban, and Patrice Chereau . . . His essay on Gogol's *The Inspector General*, the most brilliant in the entire book, has insights into the bottomless wonders of this strange work that rank with Nabokov's. . . . In *The Theater of Essence*, Kott is attempting to do for modern theater what he previously did for Shakespeare and the Greeks, to provide a new way of seeing and staging plays in the hope of changing the way we think about our lives. In this he continues to be a pivotal figure among theater commentators—generous, dedicated, original, profound."

Robert Brustein, *The New York Review of Books*

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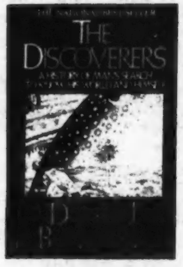

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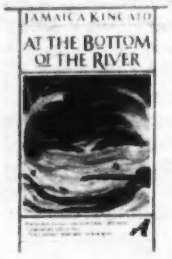

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Second sight

Re-reading between the lines

by Sven Birkerts

Not long after I'd agreed to pull together some thoughts about re-reading, I came upon this quotation from Nabokov: "You cannot read a novel, you can only re-read it." Never one to ignore the beck of serendipity, I scribbled the words down; I trusted that they would magnetize the particles needed for a little feuilleton. But as that formulation began to radiate its spokes of energy, I found myself more irritated than intrigued. I had the same chafing sensation I'd had in grade school when the wag in the next seat passed me a note that read, "This sentence is false."

I knew what Nabokov meant, of course — that there is no real appreciation without closer focus, that literature does not kiss on the first date, and so on. But I had other problems with his declaration. One was strictly logical: how can we use the word "re-reading" unless "reading" already means something? Whether or not we understand a work of literature the first time through, we are nonetheless doing something by moving our eyes back and forth. That's obvious, though, and I'm sure Nabokov knew quite well he was being provocative. The other difficulty, a more serious one, has to do with the implications of the idea. For what he is saying is that there is no living, only remembering. That may have been true for Nabokov (read his *Speak, Memory*), but I don't believe it's binding on the rest of us. I would sooner hold, with Heraclitus, that it's always a different river and always a different I stepping into it. In which case, clearly, the proposition would be reversed: you cannot re-read a novel, you can only read it.

I can think of a number of reasons for going back to a novel. If it was difficult to get through the first time — as with *Ulysses* or *Molloy* — we may return with a desire for mastery. If, on the other hand, our first experience was one of delight, or discovery, we may try to recoup some of those same sensations. Often we recall not so much the contents of a novel as our reactions to it. "I really loved that book," we might say in all honesty and yet be unable to tell our interlocutor the first thing about it. Then, invariably, there are the select novels we consider our own. We pride ourselves on knowing them well; when we pick them up again, it's for self-confirmation. They are where we store our fantasies and ambitions; we have dreamed our secret lives into them. Opening to the first page is like biting into a honeycomb.

That may be wishful thinking on my part. I know that going back to a novel, even a favorite, can be like running into an old lover on the street: the flat plane of the present gets a hole punched through it. Indeed, the book can be even more disconcerting than the lover. For we know that flesh succumbs to gravity, and we can deflect the true horror of time's passing with a simple reversal: "How you've changed . . ." But words are supposed to stand still. Were these the people we read about, suffered with? Or did some archfiend come in the night and rearrange the scenes? Soon enough we have to admit it: *we* have changed.

What a perplexing thing! The same letters, the same words and sentences, but everything means differently. When I read *The Great Gatsby* in high school, for instance, I enclosed Jay Gatsby in a soft mist. His love for Daisy Buchanan was noble and rare, and it redeemed any character flaws he might have had. Yet when I re-read the book a few years back, I was shocked to see what a pathetically deluded creature he was. Naturally, I prided myself on having picked up a thing or two about human nature. At the same time, though, I found I missed the fellow I had known. Both of them, in fact — Gatsby with his dream of love, and myself in all my susceptible innocence.

As we pass our eyes over rows and rows of words, the situations and sensations that they denote arise in us as a persuasive phantom reality. This mysterious semblance is only in part the author's creation. He marshals his sentences to create one particular world; we elicit from them quite another. We modify landscapes with images from our own experience; we thrust tics and attributes upon characters in order to pull them into the desired shape. When we return to a book, we encounter more than just the author's words — we simultaneously tour the picturesque ruins of our former selves.

We discover, too, how fickle and selective is our gaze. Rushing along to discover whether Alphonse would marry Giselle, we took no notice of Cedric's remarkable yellow waistcoat. The second time through, however, when we know damned well that the lovers will triumph, we find ourselves blinking with delight at the canary brightness of the cloth. Background and foreground are determined only in part by the author, whatever his skills; our own attention pattern decides the rest. Neither can we control what we notice and what we slight. We read and re-read with the same irreproducible singularity with which we live and remember. To paraphrase Wallace Stevens: two people talking about one book are two people talking about two books . . .

Memory compresses impressions, at times to the verge of invisibility. When we finish a novel, we don't retain the whole sequence in our minds. We fold the events and the resolution together into a kind of magician's handkerchief. A conversation or recollection may prompt us to unfold a particular episode for reinspection. But it is not the episode that we originally read, even if we are gifted with perfect recall. For hindsight — our knowledge of how it all came out — has already played its tricks with the passage. Looking back on a novel, or re-reading it, is, in this sense, analogous to looking back on events from our own past. With this difference: in the novel the facts are all in and only interpretations remain; in our own lives, however, future events may yet rearrange the past. Closure comes for us, if at all, with the last exhalation.

The subtlest and most potent pleasures of re-reading derive from this strange correspondence between written narrative and the narrative that we fashion of our own lives. When we read a novel for the first time, we are paralleling — though in a very compressed way — our own processing of experience. We expect, to be sure, that the novel will have a dramatically satisfying shape. But do we finally hope for anything less with regard to our own lives? Events, unforeseen combinations, and decisions stream toward us out of the diminishing sheaves of type, as if out of the obscurity of the future. We recognize this; we hypostatize the unread pages so that they become, in effect, the future. We could, it's true, skip quickly forward to find out how everything works out. But unless we are perverse, we resist the temptation. It is far more interesting to savor the coming events under the illusory aspect of free choice. Maybe the doomed lovers will find happiness; maybe Gatsby will win Daisy. We pit ourselves against the already determined unknown, and the tension of our will imparts to the words a special electricity.

But then what about re-reading? Wouldn't we have to say that reading — finding out — discharges the electricity once and for all? With the ordinary narrative (a run-of-the-mill mystery novel, say), it clearly does. With any novel substantial enough to support a re-reading, however, the tension just manifests itself differently,

Reading takes place in the order of free choice, re-reading in the order of destiny. As we would probably act differently if we could relive certain parts of our lives, so do we read differently when we know the fates of the characters. The second time around, our desires are set into play against our knowing. The sensations are entirely different: I can still hope that Gatsby will get Daisy, but now I suffer his every move with the certainty that he will not. He becomes another man. In my original reading I felt congruous with him — at least in the sense that I knew no more of the future than he did. Now, of necessity, I am in the superior position. I can only pity his illusion of free choice. He can do nothing that will not lead him to the pistol and the swimming pool. Re-reading flatters me by allowing me the vantage of a god, or at least of an author.

Looking at my own shelves, I see only two kinds of novels: those that I mean to read and those I mean to re-read. Future and past, you might say. But that wouldn't be quite right. In his essay "Writers and Daydreaming," Freud wrote that the memory of an experience in which a wish was fulfilled "creates a situation relating to the future which represents the fulfillment of the wish." To me that means that when I look at the books I've read and kept — kept because they have in some way fulfilled a desire — I am in fact projecting myself into the future.

I was going to end by saying: tell me what you re-read and I'll tell you who you are. Then I changed it to: tell me what you re-read and I'll tell you who you'd like to be. But now I'm wondering whether the two are so different. Couldn't we say: you are what you'd like to be? Or is the logic of that simply too Nabokovian? □

MARVIN GAYE BY MICHAEL ROMANOS

Gaye and Fela: the sons also rise

Souls on ice

Marvin Gaye, Fela, and the sins of the fathers

by Milo Miles

FELA, FELA: THIS BITCH OF A LIFE, by Carlos Moore. Allison & Busby, 287 pages, $9.95 (available from Down Home Music, 10341 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, California 94530).

DIVIDED SOUL: THE LIFE OF MARVIN GAYE, by David Ritz. McGraw-Hill, 367 pages, $16.95.

The Afro Beat of Nigerian protest singer Fela Anikulapo Kuti and the romantic, rugged soul hits of Motown star Marvin Gaye seem to be as far apart as the performers' native countries; their music is never juxtaposed on the radio, their careers never dovetailed in the minds of pop-music fans. But both men, born only six months apart (Fela in 1938, Gaye in 1939), have been black-music mold breakers who by now should be at the height of comfort and acclaim. Instead, Fela is imprisoned by his government and Gaye is dead, shot by his father. Why these performers were denied conventional success in middle age — why they were, perhaps, incapable of attaining it — is spelled out in two comprehensive first biographies, Carlos Moore's *Fela, Fela* and David Ritz's *Divided Soul*. The books are filled with eyebrow-raising information, but the biggest jolt is that in Africa and America alike, trauma nearly overshadowed the singers' triumphs.

Before his sensational slaying, Gaye's agonies — aside from his notorious reluctance to tour and his two bitter divorce cases — were glossed over in public by his record companies. Fela's skirmishes with officials and their military minions, as well as his 1978 mass marriage to 27 women, made headlines — but not in the United States. Consequently it's no surprise that *Divided Soul* and *Fela, Fela* take different tacks in examining their subjects. Although originally published in France and intended for readers much more familiar with African pop stars than are most in this country, Moore's overview concentrates on bringing out the flavor of Fela's personality and suggesting its repercussions for Nigerian society. Ritz (author of the fine biography of Ray Charles, *Brother Ray*) realizes that the most casual of music fans are aware of the Motown Gaye but that few know the charming, crazed, cornered sufferer who began cooperating with his biographer in 1979. For many, *Divided Soul* will be an introduction to the mercurial stranger who pushed the switches inside a familiar, if unpredictable, public figure. Despite these differences and others, Gaye and Fela draw together from the start — both coming from conflicted families filled with clashing moralities.

The Reverend I.O. Ransome Kuti and the Reverend Marvin Gay Sr. bore down viciously on their sons, who responded, in part, by changing their surnames as adults (Fela by replacing the English "Ransome" with the Yoruban "Anikulapo"; Gaye by adding an "e"). Ransome Kuti, a schoolteacher as well as a minister, was a model colonial-country father determined to raise respectable, Christian children. Fela — so deeply rebellious that he claims he died in infancy when his parents gave him a corny European monicker and was reborn to them only when they decided on an acceptable African name — resisted and resented any whiff of discipline. He estimates his parents gave him 3000 lashes with a cane, but the blows that scarred his bare *nyash* only hardened his mind against obedience. Fela's father died when the boy was 17; Marvin Gaye was not so fortunate. If Ransome Kuti's beatings were products of stern, misguided affection, Gay Sr.'s incessant thrashings seem to have been the work of jealous loathing for his son. Marvin Gaye was possessed by the troubling images his father offered: a lapsed preacher, mired in cruelty and resentment, given to transvestitism and unwilling to hold a job. At the same time, Gaye cherished the religious ideals — particularly the concept of unlimited love rewarding the faithful — expounded so fervently by his father. To oversimplify, the son's striving for romantic purity and political compassion was meant to emulate what Gay Sr. preached and to avoid deterioration into what he practiced.

Not surprisingly, mothers fare better in both books (Gaye's is portrayed as long-suffering, an astute consoler; Fela's as an inspiration, a feminist pioneer in Nigeria and a crusader against government corruption). Still, Alberta Gay's effect on her son was not unmixed: Ritz argues that she was the saintly embodiment of the virulent angel/whore dichotomy that plagued him — the selfless woman no wife could hope to equal. Indeed, Fela and Gaye are unrepentant chauvinists by their own admission, though Gaye manages to acknowledge it's an ideological bias, whereas Fela regards the dominance of men as the unalterable order of the cosmos.

The surrogate fathers in the biographies are the mentors who turned the singers toward popular music. For Fela, the main man was Jimo Kombi "J.K." Braimah, a friend from adolescence, and reared according to African mores, who introduced his pal to sex, drugs, and rock and roll in London in the early '60s. Braimah was also a member of Fela's first viable professional band, Koola Lobitos (who played tame, fashionable, high-life jazz). Gaye got a number of boosts during his early years in Washington (including one from the gonzo guitar-slinger himself, Bo Diddley), but the big break came in 1959, when Harvey Fuqua and the Moonglows recruited him from his local doo-wop outfit, the Marquees, and took him on the road. It was only a short hop, and a couple of years, from Fuqua's headquarters in Chicago to Detroit and the biggest boss man of them all, Berry Gordy Jr. Just as Braimah helped break Fela's ties with servile colonial propriety, Gordy offered Gaye a permanent escape from his father's Apostolic penury.

For both performers, the 1960s was a period of consolidation and preparation for their most ambitious projects. Fela was able to run his own nightclub in Lagos, the Afro Spot; and galvanized by James Brown's convulsive funk singles, he began developing the Afro Beat synthesis that sharpened his skills on saxophone and piano. Gaye likewise mastered drums and every sort of keyboard; he also became what Fela never could be — the master of a multitonal, three-octave voice as suitable for honeyed ballads as for roaring stomps. Although he was continually edged out of the limelight, first by the Supremes and the Temptations and later by Stevie Wonder and the Jackson 5, Gaye was one of Motown's most reliable hitmakers, recording 27 Top 40 songs between 1963 and 1970, both as a solo act and in his series of lusciously romantic duets with Mary Wells, Kim Weston, and especially Tammi Terrell. (One of the juiciest revelations here is who sang most of the female vocals on the final Marvin and Tammi collaboration, *Easy*.) But as even a quick perusal of his non-hit albums proves, he yearned for acceptance as a classy pop-jazz crooner. Ritz contends that he was most at ease, most assured of the worth of his singing talents, in that mode; but most fans sense the slackness of his work on the Sinatra side of the street. Supper-club Gaye was simply more acceptable to his nagging moral insecurities than Superstud Gaye ever could be.

Gaye cemented his association with Motown by marrying the president's sister, Anna Gordy, a woman who taught him how to move in high entertainment society and thus substituted for a stint in the company's finishing school. She also inspired his early string of adoration hits, like "Pride and Joy" and "How Sweet It Is To Be Loved by You." The philosophy of blending romance and business produced one of the more fascinating subplots of the Motown story, but like all touchy parts in the tale, especially the cluster of questions about Berry Gordy's financial fairness to his performers, it is largely closed to outsiders (Anna and Berry Gordy refused interviews with Ritz and also denied him the right to reprint lyrics). Clearly, though, the marriage had typically mixed effects on Gaye: "Marvin did look at Anna much the way he looked at Mother — as a woman who supported his music and boosted his confidence. . . . The Machiavellian side of his political character was excited by the prospect of moving into the center of power. . . . Anna led him to stardom. In a matter of a few short years, though, he found himself rebelling against Anna's — and her brother's — authority, just as he would rebel against all authority figures throughout his life — father, managers, wives,

Continued on page 8

Souls

Continued from page 7

the US government. The single exception was Mother, who never quite exerted her authority, thus preserving her relationship with Marvin."

Although Fela wed his first wife, Remi, around the same time Gaye hitched up with Anna, he had to travel to the United States to encounter the woman who would open his path to international semi-stardom. This crucial incident has been left curiously vague in accounts of the singer's career; it's well known that Fela became radicalized on his first American visit, in 1969, and even that the Black Panthers had a hand in his political education, but *Fela, Fela* explains that one woman, Sandra Isidore (née Smith), effected the transformation. She was able to give him the seeds of a mission for his race and his continent, partly by exposing him to information he had never encountered in Nigeria, beginning with *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*:

"'There were so many things I shared with Fela: novels, poetry, politics, music. Poems by Nikki Giovanni, the Last Poets (you know, "Niggers Are Afraid of Revolution"), Angela Davis, Martin Luther King, Stokely Carmichael, Jesse Jackson, Nina Simone's "Four Women," Miles Davis. It was constant talking every night, every day, over a period of six months. Politics. Love. Love and politics. Just the two of us.'" (She later visited Africa twice and sang with Fela on his 1976 album *Upside Down.*) Fela has since expanded the ideas he picked up from Isidore into a credo he calls Panafricanism. Much of it, at least as expounded in *Fela, Fela* (and in some of Fela's songs), seems bizarrely unworkable, calling for a return not just to pre-Christian beliefs but to pre-Industrial Revolution technology, and for the political unification of all African peoples, despite their enormous differences in tribal identity, language, and cultural history. But more important than Panafricanism's flaws is its rigorously subversive spirit. Fela's newfound convictions would make him one of the leaders of Third World musician agitators. As he puts it, "I was getting very powerful. Very listened to. Very liked. But for the authorities, very . . . daaaaannnnngerous!"

Although the maddening delays between records that would dog him the rest of his life had already begun by 1971, Marvin Gaye was also spurred to step into the political arena by the turmoil of the times. His masterwork, *What's Going On*, ushered in the "Tell it like it is" era of R&B (influencing Curtis Mayfield's *Superfly* and others) as well as proving that black performers could walk off the production line, produce and arrange more idiosyncratic and eclectic LPs, and score big with the fans (influencing hit albums as diverse as Stevie Wonder's *Music of My Mind* and Michael Jackson's *Thriller*). Many reviewers, used to the dulcet lover of "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" and the rogue cuckold of "Heard It Through the Grapevine," were surprised by Gaye's adventurousness in the studio and by his eloquence in songs like "What's Going On" and "Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler)." The album balances more of his varied strengths — religious and romantic vocals, deep and devious grooves — than any other. But after *What's Going On* (except for 1979's tormented, discursive *In Our Lifetime*), Gaye, always compulsively devoted to his impulses, played down social themes. (Instead, his fixations often returned to sex — most spectacularly on 1973's *Let's Get It On.*)

Because of Fela's reputation as a pot-smoking satyr, a dissident who had declared his communal household and its grounds an independent republic and sanctuary for the oppressed, harassment from police and searches for runaway girls and contraband were inevitable. At first, imprisonment on charges of kidnapping and drug use only encouraged Fela to greater defiance and a more outrageous, agitprop Afro Beat — on *Expensive Shit* (1975), *Before I Jump like Monkey Give Me Banana* (1976), and *Zombie* (1976). But early in 1977, after he snubbed the government's public-relations music extravaganza, FESTAC, and held his own counterfestival, the hammer came down. *Fela, Fela* details the assault by several hundred soldiers on Fela's Kalukuta compound, in which he was brutally thrashed, several of his polygamous "queens" were raped and beaten, his 77-year-old mother was thrown from a window, and the houses were burned flat. Fela later responded with his most corrosive denunciations of military statesmen (available domestically on Arista's *Black President*), but his productivity has faltered and he has not been allowed to emigrate from Nigeria or tour regularly. His jailing last year, based on trumped-up money-smuggling accusations, makes it clear his enemies now regard him as too celebrated to kill but too dangerous to be left free.

Gaye, on the other hand, was razed and ruined by internal tyrants. Increasingly obsessed by suicide, impotence, slavery to cocaine, and his massive debts to the IRS, he left Anna in 1973 for Janis Hunter, who was only 20 when he married her four years

Continued on page 9

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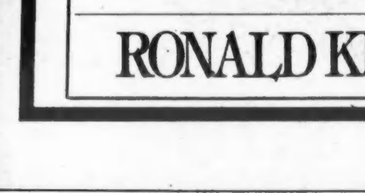

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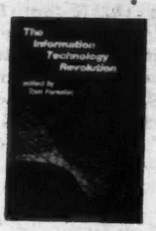
Souls

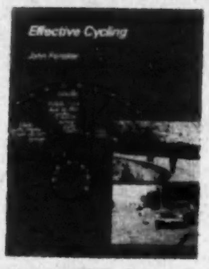
Continued from page 8

later. By then, their relationship was riddled with abuse and frustration, and they were divorced in 1980. The last decade of his career was marked by an ugly, ever-intensifying cycle of rebound and collapse: hide away and waste money, postpone recording as long as possible, seize on fresh songwriting tactics, agonize over the record when forced to make it, postpone touring as long as possible, alternate on-stage lasciviousness and private shame, hide away and waste money. Gaye's mortal battle with his demons is carried on with such valor and flashes of euphoria, and his fears are so vile and relentless, that the last third of *Divided Soul* suggests a harrowing parable of a man reaching for God but embracing Satan, gradually losing his ability to tell the difference. His day-to-day disorder and his final depression in 1982-'83 were so absolute he was spiritually dead well before he finally lashed out physically at his father. That was all it took. As his sister Jeanne explained: " 'Father had made it very clear . . . that if Marvin were to strike him, he'd murder him. Father said so publicly on more than one occasion.' " And doesn't a preacher always keep his word?

Fela, Fela and *Divided Soul* are uneven, occasionally clumsy books. The first in particular is rambling and muddled, mixing first-person narrative with interviews and friendly but overwrought third-person histories. It's unclear why the folk-wisdom monologue (which includes a lyrical and savvy African creation tale) that frames the body of the biography pretends to be his mother's advice to Fela from beyond the grave when it was written by author Moore's wife. When Fela's voice cuts through, he is by turns hilarious, innocent, furious, and explosively profane (some pages have more "motherfuckers" in them than the exercise yard at Sing Sing). Although it's clear Fela's greatest shortcoming is a failure to learn, as Bob Marley did, the art of pragmatic compromising that would allow him to reach the widest possible audience, it's also clear that he has lived up to his adopted name, which translates as "the one who emanates greatness, who carries death in his quiver, and who cannot be killed by human entity."

For his part, Ritz lapses into lugubrious excess at times ("The killer was loose. Father was down the hall. Beatings that lasted a decade. Revenge. Fear. Death. How and when would it come? How much longer?"), and he's an eccentric judge of a performer's achievements, tending to rate records on the profundity of their intentions rather than the success of their musical execution. (One curious footnote to the book: Ritz claimed to have helped write "Sexual Healing" and was litigating the issue when Gaye died — which may explain why he so scrupulously examines previous conflicts about co-writing credits in Gaye's career.) Worst of all, he sprinkles his text with intrusive references and comparisons to literary figures — Dante, Keats, Nietzsche — that are intended to raise Gaye's stature but instead emphasize the author's streak of pomposity. ("I read to him the Shelley poem 'To a Skylark.' . . . Gaye's lyrics were remarkably similar, though he himself had never read a line of the English poet.") Nonetheless, both Moore and Ritz have done their subjects — and their readers — a signal service by according Fela and Gaye the detailed chronicle their lives command. If these stories are not seamlessly told, they remain haunting moral tales. ☐





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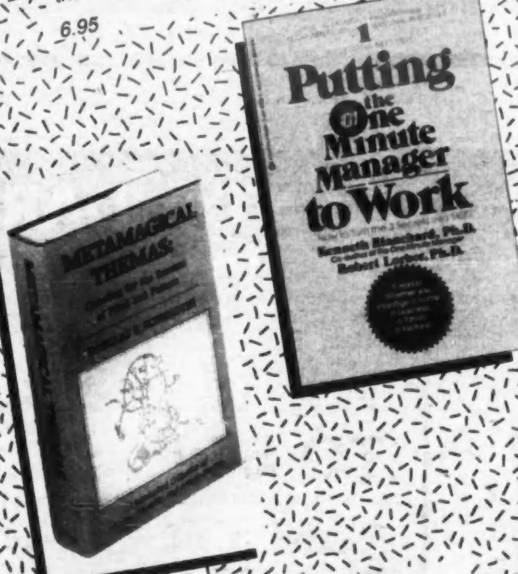

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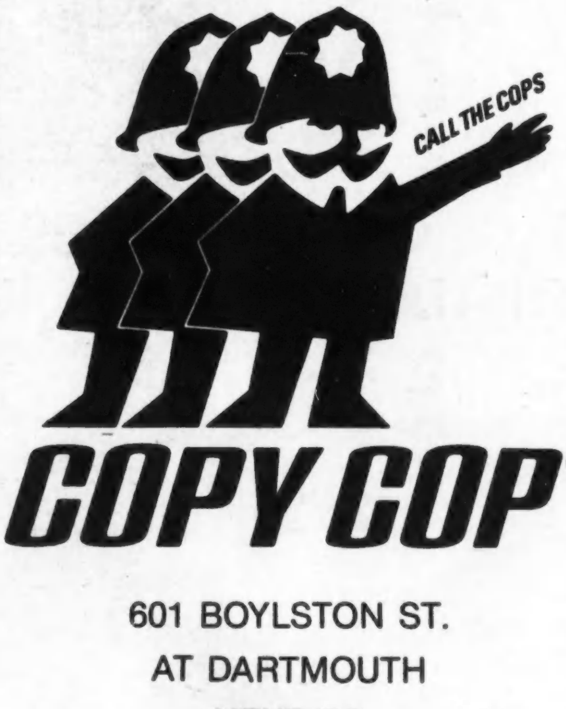

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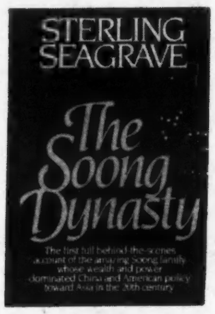

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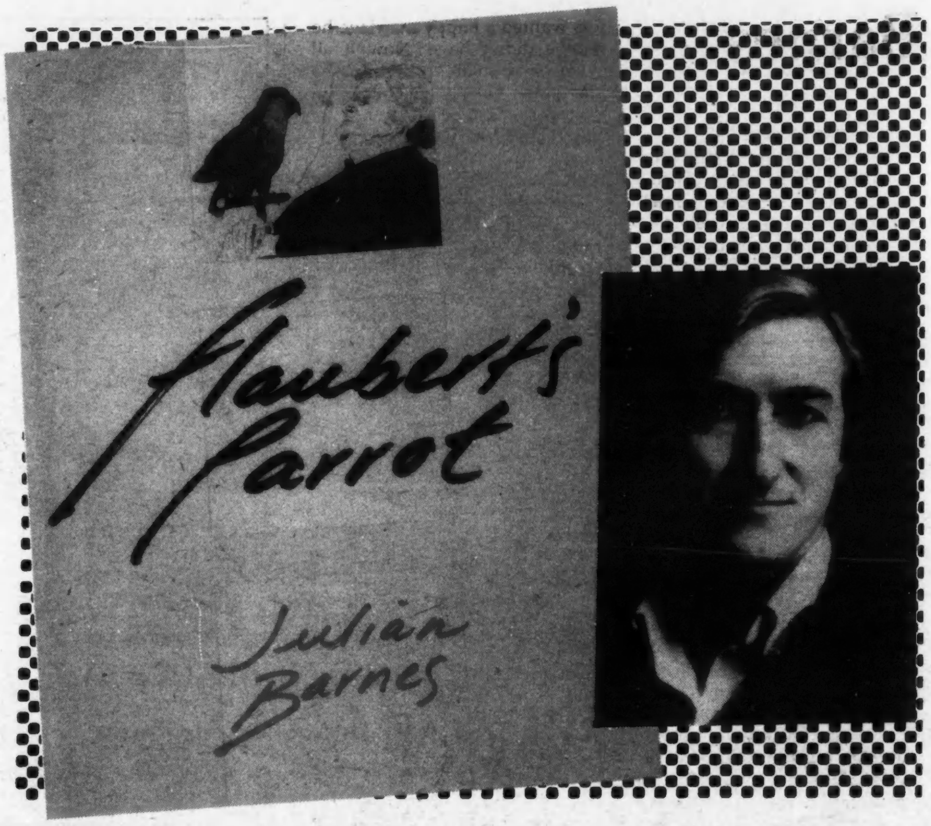

Bird's-eye view

Julian Barnes stuffs postmodernism

by James Hunter

FLAUBERT'S PARROT, by Julian Barnes. Knopf, 190 pages, $13.95.

In the middle of *Flaubert's Parrot,* the third novel by 39-year-old British writer and TV critic Julian Barnes, the book's contemporary English narrator, Geoffrey Braithwaite, speculates how he might advertise himself in a *New Statesman* personal:

> *60+ widowed doctor, children grown up, active, cheerful if inclined to melancholy, kindly, non-smoker, amateur Flaubert scholar, likes reading, food, travel to familiar places, old films, has friends . . . .*

"I always read those pining paragraphs in the back of magazines," he explains, adding that he never "believes" them. "No one would think of himself as an active non-smoker inclined to melancholy if that wasn't encouraged, even demanded, by the form." Then, as he's done before and can't help continuing to do, Braithwaite quotes Flaubert: "Style does arise from subject matter."

Flaubert's Parrot, which includes shrewd and entertaining chapters written in the form of chronologies and dictionaries and literature essay exams, is that thing some readers shun and others take right to their analytical hearts: the postmodernist novel. It's Barnes's creation of Braithwaite's voice, no matter how often that voice changes. It's also the *story* of Braithwaite, an everyday professional man whose thought processes are dominated by the life and art of Gustave Flaubert, the French author famous for seeking to reconstruct the world within each of his precision sentences. And it's the portrait of a man who's grieving over the death of his mysterious wife, Ellen, she of the greenish-blue eyes and a tendency to bruise easily, and notably without "some rash devotion to a dead foreigner to sustain her."

The book's 15 chapters are framed by two tracing Braithwaite's discovery that a stuffed parrot in Croisset believed to be the one Flaubert borrowed from the Museum of Rouen for the writing of "Un coeur simple" (the first story in *Three Tales*) may be the wrong old bird. Barnes treats this material in a teasing, Borgesian manner; it results in an intellectual detective narrative whose conclusion affects the novel's metaphysical ending. But Braithwaite is always throwing around critical questions. Is *Madame Bovary* flawed, as academic critics like Enid Starkie have charged, because Flaubert can't get the color of Emma's eyes straight? Doesn't the same critique that makes a hog "regal" also sometimes render a king "swinish"? Is a novel whose method might be termed coy necessarily useless? Can you discuss a writer's life by discussing the trains he rode? Can you work through your grief by writing about Flaubert? Why will you never bump into an active non-smoker inclined to melancholy in line at the supermarket? That's the sort of thing Barnes has Braithwaite wonder.

But the novel is framed in a different sense by two brilliant patches of writing (chapters three and 13), one of which recounts Braithwaite's Flaubert-related (of course) dealings with an American Edward Gosse scholar, the other of which confronts the enigma of Ellen as directly as it seems her husband can. The first of them begins with Braithwaite telling how he happened to meet Ed Winterton in London — they'd both reached for the same copy of Turgenev's *Literary Reminiscences* at a book fair at the Europa Hotel. Braithwaite, who later says he prefers George Eliot "and even Thackeray" to Dickens and will save Virginia Woolf "for when I'm dead," initially takes a liking to the decidedly untrendy Winterton: "I meet few American academics, and was pleasantly surprised that this one was bored by Bloomsbury, and happy to leave the modern movement to his younger and more ambitious colleagues." Winterton, in time, writes to Braithwaite from America that within the course of preparing his fated biography of Gosse he's uncovered letters that might substantiate claims of a romantic liaison between Flaubert and one Juliet Herbert, who, before returning to Britain, had been governess to Flaubert's niece. This, of course, sends visions of a "Flaubert's English Fiancée" *TLS* scoop dancing through Braithwaite's amateur-scholar head (Winterton tantalizingly characterizes the correspondence as candid and fascinating). But Braithwaite has already noted that Winterton's something of a loser: "He bought English clothes without looking at all English." Until Winterton flies back to London, Braithwaite worries that he would "blurt out his discovery on campus and guilelessly yield up his cache to some ambitious Gallicist with an astronaut's haircut." When the American tells Braithwaite he's destroyed the letters because in the last one Flaubert had asked Herbert to burn them all, Braithwaite's more than dumfounded; he's furious. "What a smug, moralizing bastard he was," he says of Winterton. "He wore ethics the way tarts wear make-up."

"I'm aiming to tell the truth," Braithwaite says about halfway through the novel, "though mistakes are, I suppose, inevitable." When in the antepenultimate chapter he tries to fill in his early sentence "My wife . . . died," Braithwaite starts talking about Betty Corrinder. "She was, it seems, a bit fast; though speed is always exaggerated by those standing still. Fast, this Betty Corrinder was, and pubmen sniggered enviously. 'You know what they say about Betty Corrinder.' It was a statement, not a question, though a question now followed it. 'What's the difference between Betty Corrinder and the Eiffel Tower? Go on, what's the difference between Betty Corrinder and the Eiffel Tower?' A pause for the last moments of private knowledge. 'Not everyone's been up the Eiffel Tower.' " It seems that, except for some time when her children were young, Braithwaite's wife was like Betty Corrinder. Later, he fears that he exaggerates and says Ellen was not like Betty Corrinder, "whatever Betty Corrinder was like"; he also admits that this adulterous "mood" didn't come upon Ellen until she was 50. But he says, "For God's sake, her life is not a moral tale. No one's is. All I'm saying is that both her secret life and her despair lay in the same inner chamber of her heart, inaccessible to me."

Most of *Flaubert's Parrot,* though, doesn't concern itself with Ellen or Betty Corrinder or even poor Ed Winterton. Braithwaite's mind is on Flaubert — it's unsettling how he tries to engage himself with other topics and can't. In the process

Continued on page 11

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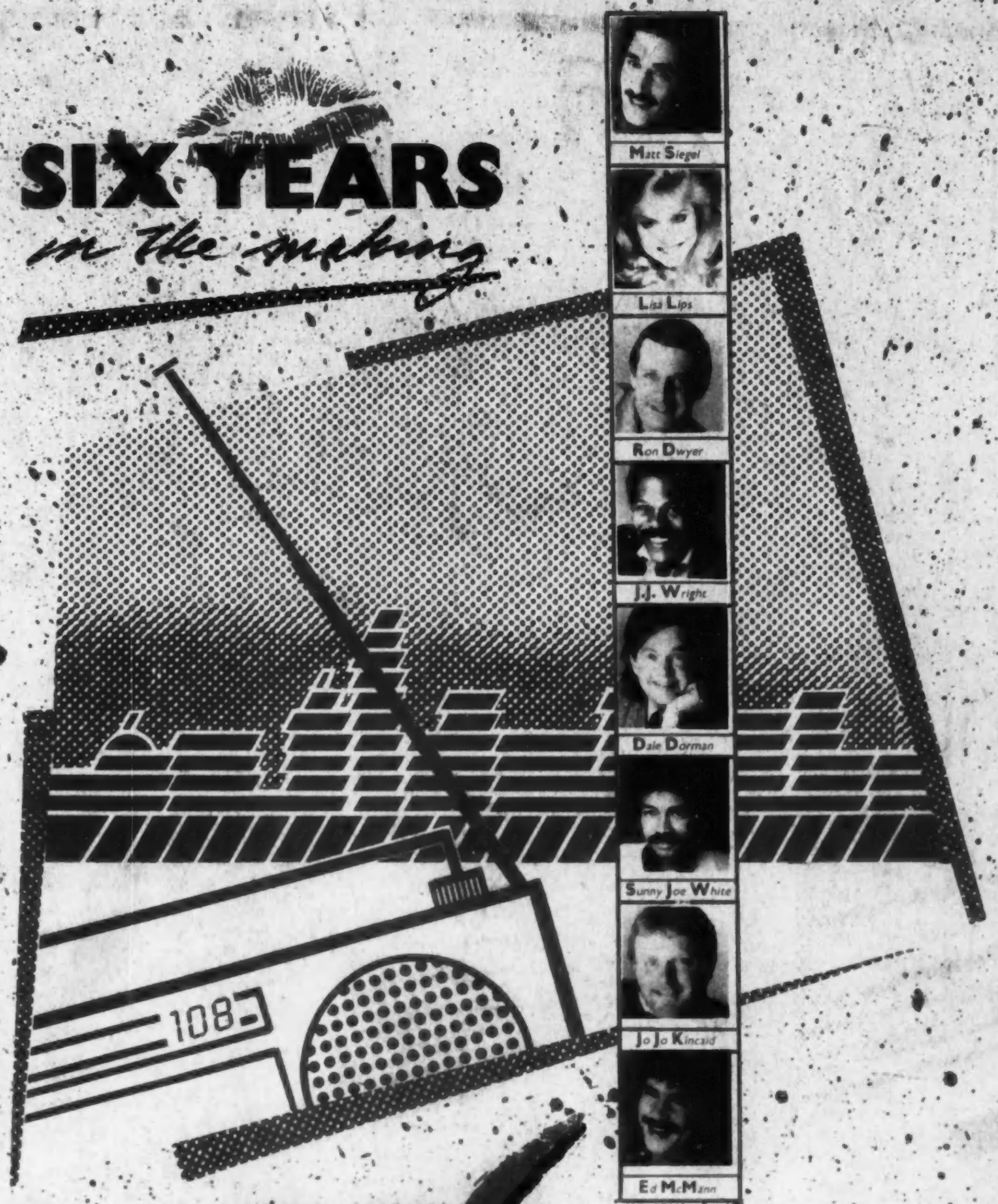
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Kiss - 108 FM
The Party — The Station

Rich Balsbaugh, the Chief Executive Officer of KISS-108 FM, sits back at his desk and thinks about the past six incredible years. "When I came here as General Manager, I didn't just change the sound from Beautiful Music (WWEL) to KISS Music . . I changed everything at the station — call letters, format, personnel. It became a new family." The change, it turns out, was about as successful as one could get. "We wanted to give something back to our listeners in thanks for the support that made us a top-rated station," he continues, "hence, the KISS Party."

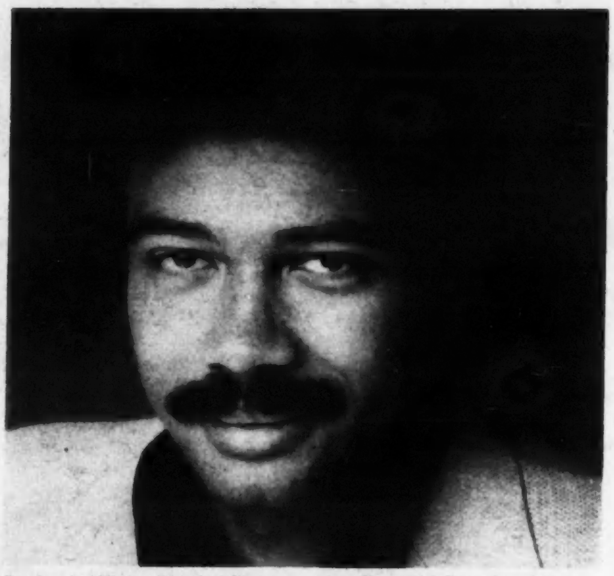
Rich Balsbaugh, Chief Executive Officer of Pyramid Broadcasting.

These parties are no small affair. They've become as traditional a spring event as the Boston Marathon and the Celtics' victory parade. Previous bashes have been held in the stylish confines of the Metro, but this year, in order to make more space for more listeners, the celebration will swell through the 15,000 seat Boston Garden. Co-hosts Cyndi Lauper and Peter Wolf front the performances of Kool and the Gang, Bryan Adams, the New Edition, John Cafferty and the Beaver Brown Band, and Sheila E. And then there's always the element of surprise appearances!

But what makes up the workings of a radio station that is so popular, so listened to, so ready to get out and carouse every year with its loyal fans?

Newly appointed General Manager Dottie Jones sums it up easily. "Programming is the single most important aspect of the station." KISS-108 is programmed to reflect how much of the Boston population feels about themselves. Because of its lifestyle-oriented, trend-following atmosphere, Program Director Sunny Joe White likes to refer to the station as a "People Magazine of the air." "The radio stations that are surviving and thriving are always taking a chance," says Sunny. "As Boston changes, the station changes with it."

Boston, each day more and more a major cosmopolitan city, is constantly on the move. People are out there looking good, feeling good, spending money, and having a great time. Ron Dwyer, mid-morning announcer, says, "The high level of education in Boston makes the people very aware, and you don't have to worry about saying things that might go over their heads." Boston is one of the top radio markets in the United States. Many of the stations play the same songs, but an outstanding difference at KISS-108 is the band of different, unique personalities. "Other stations have homogenized voices," says early morning co-host Lisa Lips. Ron Dwyer again, "We're not just call letters, time, and temp. We're personal." Sunny Joe White stresses to all members of his staff not to interfere with the music, but to enhance it. "In this way," he explains, the announcers' creativity is allowed to blossom."


Sunny Jo White, Chief of Programming Pyramid Broadcasting. KISS-108 Program Director.

And then there's the music itself. People who haven't listened for a while might still think KISS-108 is strictly a "disco station." Well, there *is* dance music (as it's now properly called), along with good, straight, strong, all-American rock 'n' roll, a well-placed pop tune, and an oldie or two. "We listen to every record that comes in," says Music Director Geni (pronounced Jeannie) Donaghey. "We talk to the record company people, read the trades, and listen to the other stations." Dottie Jones says, "The Music Department is trained to know what's about to take off." Geni and Programming Assistant Sue O'Connell agree that, "The most important thing about a song is the *sound* and *feel* of it — whether it's going to fit and flow with the station — but the *overall* sound of the station is more important than any one record.

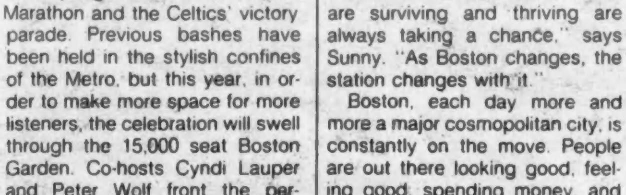
Left to right: Lark Logan, Andrew Wolf, and Diana Steele.

Director of Promotions Jim Berry talks about another component of the KISS-108 story. "The promotional philosophy has always been to have the listener participate, be connected with the station." Among the giveaways have been: T-Birds, diamonds, trips to London and Rio, $100,000, and free lunch for 10,000 on City Hall Plaza. "Personalities, promotion, and music merge together as a unit," continues Jim. "This then becomes the personality of the station."

Sunny Joe White knows what he's doing in aiming the shape and direction of KISS-108. He and the whole crew like to think they've created the kind of station where, if you turn it off, you'll miss something. With summer around the corner, and a great feeling of celebration in the air, the high spirits and energy-infused atmosphere of KISS-108 makes the station what Sunny proudly likes to call "a Party Animal."

News
Bill Rossi & Bill Costa

"There are bad and good news stories going on all the time, but this is an entertainment station. We're just going to use those stories that apply to *our* listeners," says Bill Rossi, News Director and Morning News Anchor. This isn't to say that hard news items are ignored on KISS-108 newscasts, they're just selected carefully, using what Bill Rossi likes to call a "gut feeling" as to what to put in.


The News Department left to right: Bill Rossi, Bill Costa, and Dan Steward.

He's up every morning at 3:30 in order to be at the station and already embroiled in work by 5:00. After a series of three-minute reports throughout the morning, he's off to Northeast Broadcasting School to teach journalism and broadcasting courses. "One thing we'd like at KISS is to get more feedback from the listeners — a bigger sampling of likes and dislikes."

Any spare time he finds might be taken up by listening to some country music at home or checking out other stations' newscasts. His wife, Hillary Stevens, is News Director of WKKT in Boston, and the only steadfast home rule they both subscribe to is "We don't talk shop."

With the idea that afternoons are more suited to *people*-related stories than just *news*-related stories, Bill Costa, Assistant News Director and Afternoon Anchor, recently started a feature that leans even closer to the listening audience. On Fridays, fora few minutes just before 6:00, he presents the KISS-108 Happy Hour, during which he might grab *anybody* walking past the broadcast booth to find out what they're doing that weekend. This fits right in with his style of building news items not only around celebrities coming to town, but also around people whom he talks with and about everyday, normal people who might have bumped into the big names.

Growing up in Cambridge, Bill says, "I knew I liked to write pretty early. I was the one guy in class who actually enjoyed getting essay assignments." Aside from keeping up with news from alternative sources like *Rolling Stone* and *Interview*, he admits to being an exercise freak, visiting the gym, running marathons and playing tennis. "But if I could play an instrument," he says, "I'd really want to be a rock star."

Kiss
Camp Joy Connection

Noting that such a large amount of the KISS-108 audience lives, works, and plays in Boston, station Chief Executive Officer Rich Balsbaugh contacted Rosemarie Sansone, Director of Mayor Flynn's Office of Business and Cultural Development, offering to donate a share of proceeds from this year's KISS Party to a city program in need of help. Rich chose from a list of organizations suggested by Rosemarie, and in an act of unprecedented commitment from a private sponsor, offered a gift of at least $50,000 to Camp Joy.

Established in 1946 as a day camp for approximately 40 mentally or physically disabled children, Camp Joy now runs year round and services close to 900 participants at nine community school sites throughout the city. The major philosophy of Camp Joy is that "individuals learn while they play." A myriad of activities include swimming, dancing, acting, and frequent field trips to various museums, theatres, picnics and educational, historical features of Boston.

An interesting aspect of the program is its idea of "play with a purpose." Participants are initially evaluated by the staff in order to develop appropriate, obtainable goals for each camper. A unique computer-assisted filing system is kept on each camper's "individual recreation plan" and his or her progress within the plan. This continuing program helps the staff in developing future program plans and activities.

Camp Joy represents many things to many people: pride and purpose to the staff, enjoyment and accomplishment to the campers, sharing and a sense of gratification to all.

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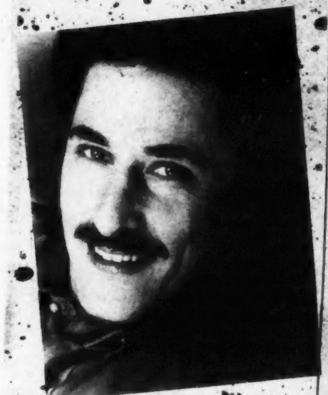
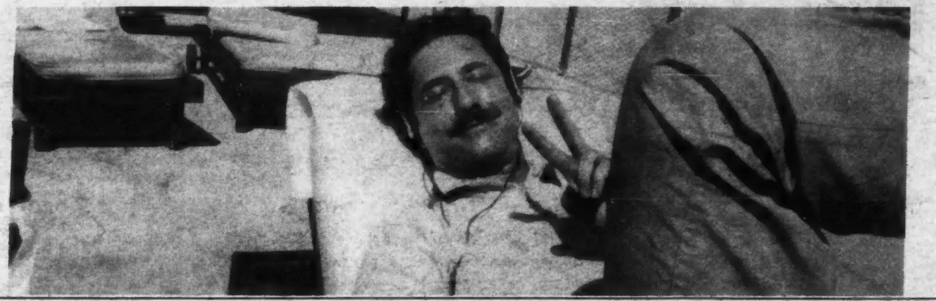
Matt Siegel
Mornings, 5:30—9:00

Matty hails from the one-time sleepy little bohemian village of Spring Valley, NY. By the time he found himself on stage, emceeing his high-school talent show, he already knew that some form of show business was for him. "I knew then," he says, "that it was more comfortable doing this than real life." Before joining the original ranks of KISS-108, he worked in Boston radio for a few years and dabbled in TV as the host of "Five All Night" ("I somehow got that job because I looked like someone who didn't belong on TV"). If it hasn't been reached yet, his goal is to have the best morning show in town.

Concerning the city of Boston, "The people have been insanely, ridiculously good to me. I love it when I'm recognized on the street." Springsteen remains a musical favorite and anyone walking by the studio while he's on the turntable will most probably find Matty jumping around with an air guitar. It's a good bet that he has curbed his leaning toward "stretching the truth a little" on air because "I really *was* on 'Miami Vice.' I was in the background and the scene was out of focus." An apology to the listeners for some of those other fibs — "I meant no harm."





Miami Matt studying his lines for his appearance on "Miami Vice."

Lisa Lips
Mornings with Matty

Lisa's background remains a bit mysterious, but there's no doubt she knows exactly what she's doing in radio. She says, "All of us try to entertain the people mostly." If morning listeners need a little boost, Lisa and Matty are there scouring the newspapers, working out a few routines, and being spontaneous, hopefully keeping the fans smiling. "If people could see us in the morning," she adds, "they'd get an even bigger laugh." This might have something to do with mentions of uncombed hair or the fact that once in a while the color of the day is whatever is clean.

For the Soap Update, Lisa doesn't just rely on her own viewings of the shows. She calls friends who are also addicted, discusses the intricate plot lines, then files her report.

She loves the people of the city and can be found spinning at different clubs around town. "If you don't get out with your audience, how can you tell where their heads are at!" She'll be the first to tell you that her favorite event of the year is the KISS Party. And again, becoming a bit more mysterious, Lisa mentions that she, too, is "going to look for the ladder."

Lisa Lips has the best of both worlds with Matty in the morning and her Soap Update in the afternoons with Dale Dorman.

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METRO

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Where Boston puts on its best.

Ron Dwyer
Mornings, 9:00—Noon

There was a time when Ron earned his paycheck by teaching high-school English, but he never forgot that next to the word *ambition* in his own high school yearbook, were the words *radio/tv announcer*. He made that ambition

come very true, too. At one point in his career, he did a live beautiful music broadcast in the morning, ran across town in the afternoon to program an oldies show (under a different name), and later that day, did off-camera announcing at a TV station (where he didn't have to use a name). No one in his varied audience ever knew.

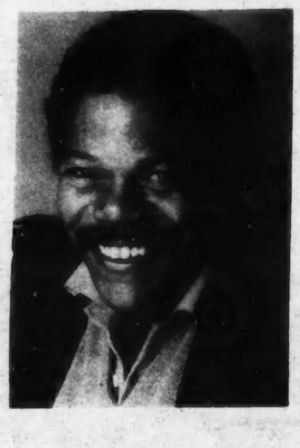
"Boston is where my heart is. I get to the phones as much as possible to find out who's listening and why they're listening." With a deep voice that he says could once actually hit soprano notes, Ron talks about the energy level he attains on the air. "You develop a chameleon ability. I've worked everything from country to classical. I can adapt to what the people want."

Even with the incredible amount of promotions going on all the time at KISS-108, he has no trouble picking his favorite. "When I worked in Philadelphia, I filled some time taking courses in psychic sciences. When KISS's idea of sending a couple of people to the house in Amityville came up, I grabbed at it and was thrilled when we helped expose the hoax."

J.J. Wright
Afternoons, Noon—3:00

During his seven-year reign as a camp counselor in Louisville, Kentucky, J.J. constantly found himself putting together, then hosting, the camp show. His ability keep things hopping for a couple of hours led him into the radio field to try out a few format styles before finding his home at KISS-108.

His original goal when moving up to the Boston area was to give the market five years, then move on. But those five years came and went a while ago. "This is a fun city and it's great to work at a station that's willing to take chances on new artists." His love for the city is even more apparent in the Boston-accented spelling of his Afghan, who answers to the name of Tahrah.



A good amount of J.J.'s time is spent narrating industrial films and TV spots. Anyone catching a screening of the film "Night School" can try to find the cop J.J. plays. And true fans will brave the trip up to Derry, NH, where he hosts "TV Bingo" on WNDS.

He'll tell anyone he meets that doing whatever you do and enjoying it is the best principle to live by. "My attitude when I'm on the air is to have a party. And I'm doing it on the only station in town."

"Sundays sizzle on Kiss 108 fm!"

Rick DEES'
WEEKLY TOP 40

KISS 108 FM

Join Rick Dees, host of "SOLID GOLD," as he counts down America's favorite hits on KISS-108FM. Win $1,000 by correctly choosing next week's top ten records from the list below. Pick the top ten records in the correct order and listen Sunday, May 19th, as Rick Dees counts them down.*

☐ Everybody Wants To Rule The World	TEARS FOR FEARS	☐ Everything She Wants	WHAM!
☐ Forever Man	ERIC CLAPTON	☐ Along Comes A Woman	CHICAGO
☐ Neverending Story	LIMAHL	☐ Rock 'N' Girls	JOHN FOGERTY
☐ We Are The World	U.S.A. FOR AFRICA	☐ Just A Gigolo	DAVID LEE ROTH
☐ Things Can Only Get Better	HOWARD JONES	☐ Obsession	ANIMOTION
☐ Lovergirl	TEENA MARIE	☐ Don't Come Around Here No More	TOM PETTY
☐ Some Things Are Better Left Unsaid	HALL & OATES	☐ Suddenly	BILLY OCEAN
☐ Rhythm Of The Night	DEBARGE	☐ One Night In Bangkhok	MURRAY HEAD
☐ All She Wants To Do Is Dance	DON HENLEY	☐ Vox Humana	KENNY LOGGINS
☐ Smooth Operator	SADE	☐ Some Like It Hot	POWER STATION
☐ Nightshift	COMMODORES	☐ Missing You	DIANA ROSS
☐ Crazy For You	MADONNA	☐ Fresh	KOOL & THE GANG
☐ I'm On Fire	BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN	☐ One More Lonely Night	REO SPEEDWAGON
☐ That Was Yesterday	FOREIGNER	☐ Heaven	BRYAN ADAMS
☐ One More Night	PHIL COLLINS	☐ Don't You (Forget About Me)	SIMPLE MINDS

Listen for the premiere of Rick Dees' Weekly Countdown, Sunday, May 19th, 8AM-12NOON.

Sizzling Sundays Continue:

Rick Dees' Weekly Top 40	8AM-12NOON
Scott Shannon	6PM-9PM
Joel Denver's Future Hits	9PM-10PM
Vinnie Peruzzi's Sixties Hall of Fame	10PM-1AM

***Send entries to "TOP 40," P.O. Box 128, Medford, MA 02155. All entries must be received by Friday, May 17th. The entry with the correct list of records will win $1,000. In case of a tie, winner will be drawn at random. Winner will be notified by KISS-108FM.**

ENTRY FORM

Name____________________

Address____________________

City/Town__________ State_____ Zip Code________

Phone Number____________________

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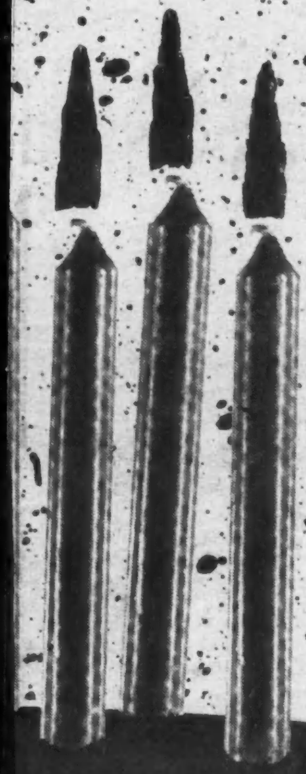

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Name

Address

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Oxfam America is a non-sectarian international agency that funds disaster relief and self-help development programs around the world. Oxfam receives no government funds and relies solely on contributions from individuals and groups.

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You've seen the pictures and read the accounts of the tragedy in Ethiopia... thousands have already died of starvation, disease and exposure to the elements.

The UN estimates that seven million Ethiopians are desperately short of food, water and other basic necessities.

And Oxfam field workers are predicting the worst is yet to come...because of the drought that is raging across Africa there will be disastrous harvests this year. Ethiopia is in the grip of the worst famine in this century.

People in all affected areas of Ethiopia need our help...and they need it now.

Oxfam America, as it did in Bangladesh and Kampuchea (Cambodia), is responding to the call.

So far Oxfam America has provided emergency food supplements, shelter materials and medical supplies. We're also supporting nutritional workers treating famine victims. In addition, we're working closely with OXFAM (U.K.) which has just delivered 14,000 metric tons of grain for emergency feeding programs...flown in 25,200 blankets and 70 bales of baby sweaters to keep people from freezing...shipped milk powder, edible oils and sugar, water storage tanks, land rovers and trucks.

But much, much more needs to be done. We must continue to send in a steady supply of food and other aid.

And as we did in disaster situations like Kampuchea (Cambodia), we must help the Ethiopian people rebuild their agricultural systems and become self-sufficient again.

But first, we must save a people. So, as we have in the past, we ask for your generosity and support for this life-saving mission. Won't you join with us today?

Oxfam America

115 Broadway
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Dale Dorman

Afternoons, 3:00—6:00

"Radio and TV announcing is my whole life. I'd love to do this forever." These are no idle words from Dale Dorman. He really means it. He's *so* into his work that a couple of years ago, after a pretty rough motorcycle accident, he spent two weeks broadcasting from a mattress in the studio, while recuperating.

"I'm very lucky to be in this situation. I've worked at stations in San Francisco and Denver and the bosses have said, 'Sound like you're having fun.' But at KISS you really *do* have fun." Salutes to and requests from people at work go out daily and remote broadcasts and personal appearances have become a way of life for him. A recent favorite was the honor of being ring announcer at a Boston Garden Hulk Hogan match.

We all have our hobbies. Dale owns a small fleet of limousines and manages to get a little relaxation by sometimes jumping behind the wheel himself and getting the bride to the reception.

Foremost in his life, though, are his Boston listeners. "The people here are great," he says. "And when they like you, they take you into their family. They take you into their cars and homes."

Sunny Joe White

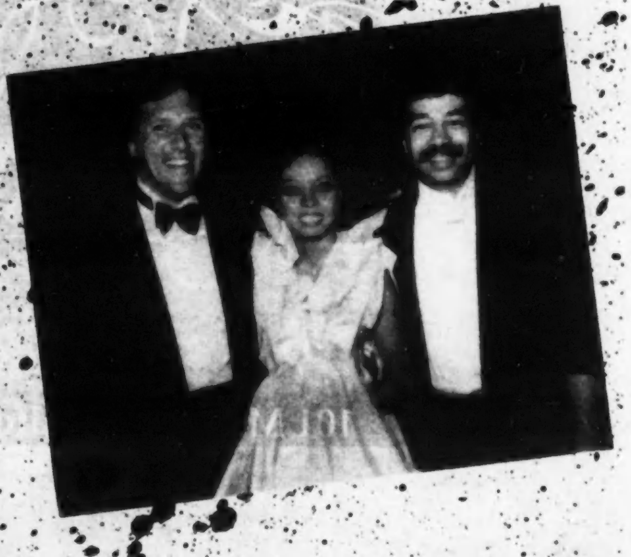
Evenings, 6:00—9:00

Sunny Joe White is a busy man. Besides hosting the "White Knight" post-drive time shift weekdays, he's KISS-108's Program Director, personally responsible for everything that goes out over the air.

Sunny started broadcasting full time when still a teenager in his hometown, Charlotte, NC. Subsequent jobs brought him through St. Louis and Philadelphia before settling down in what he constantly refers to as "the world's greatest city." It's easy for him to qualify that remark. "Boston is open-minded, alive, and hip," he says. "It's great to be working in a city that's become such a major breakout market for new music."

Around the studio, his staff refers to him as a clothes horse and it's not unusual to catch him wearing an outfit with more colors than a rainbow or see his smiling face sticking out of a stark white sweatsuit. If you're hungry, he'll tell you without a second thought that Boston is great for Italian food, but when in LA, nothing keeps him away from Spago's for pizza.

Sunny travels a lot as programming consultant for KISS-108's mother company, Pyramid Broadcasting, which owns ten outlets around the country. Wherever he is, the radio is on, being punched up and down the dial. By intently keeping tabs on the competition, he promises, "We're carving our way into rock 'n' roll history



Rich Balsbaugh, Diana Ross, and Sunny Joe White.

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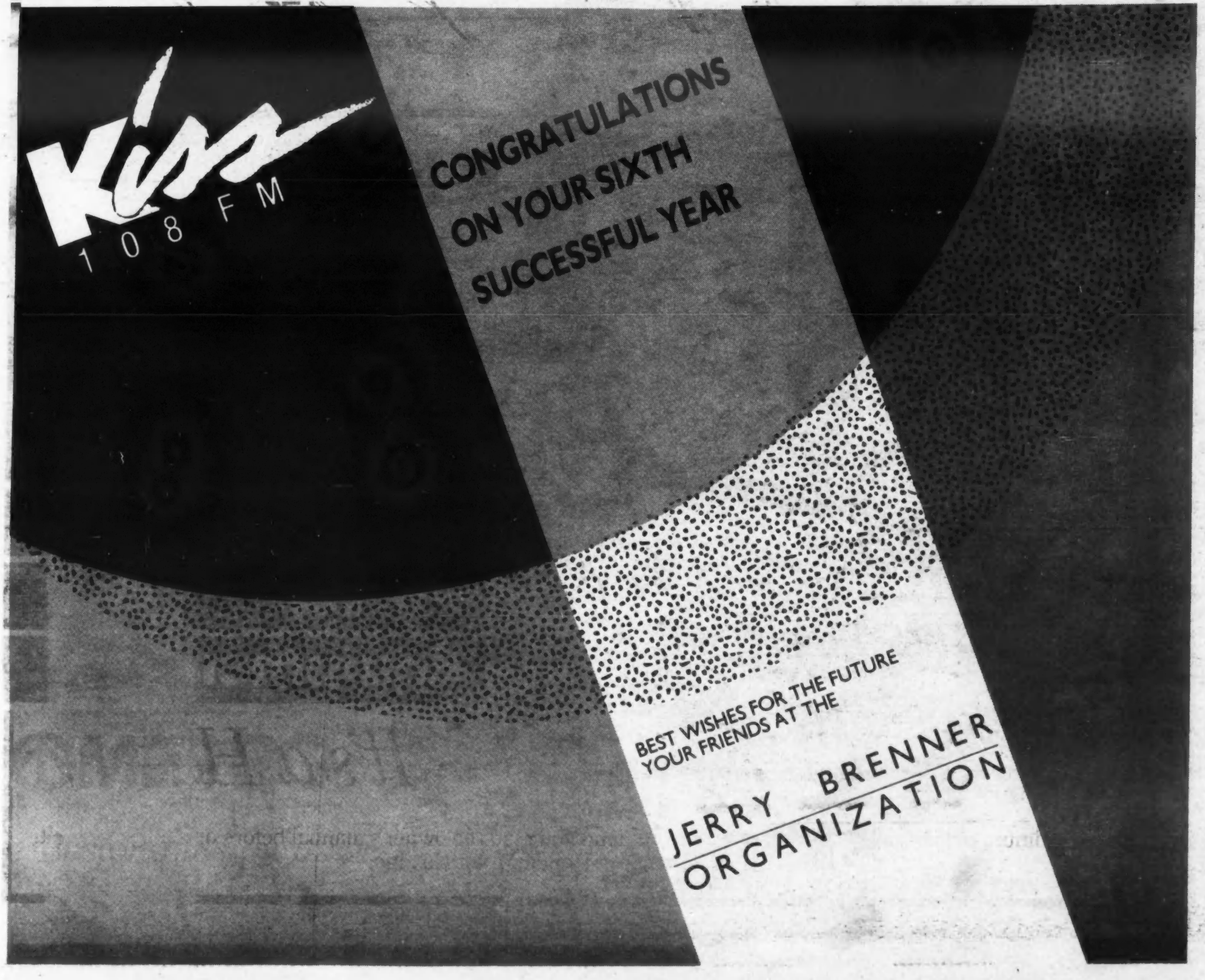
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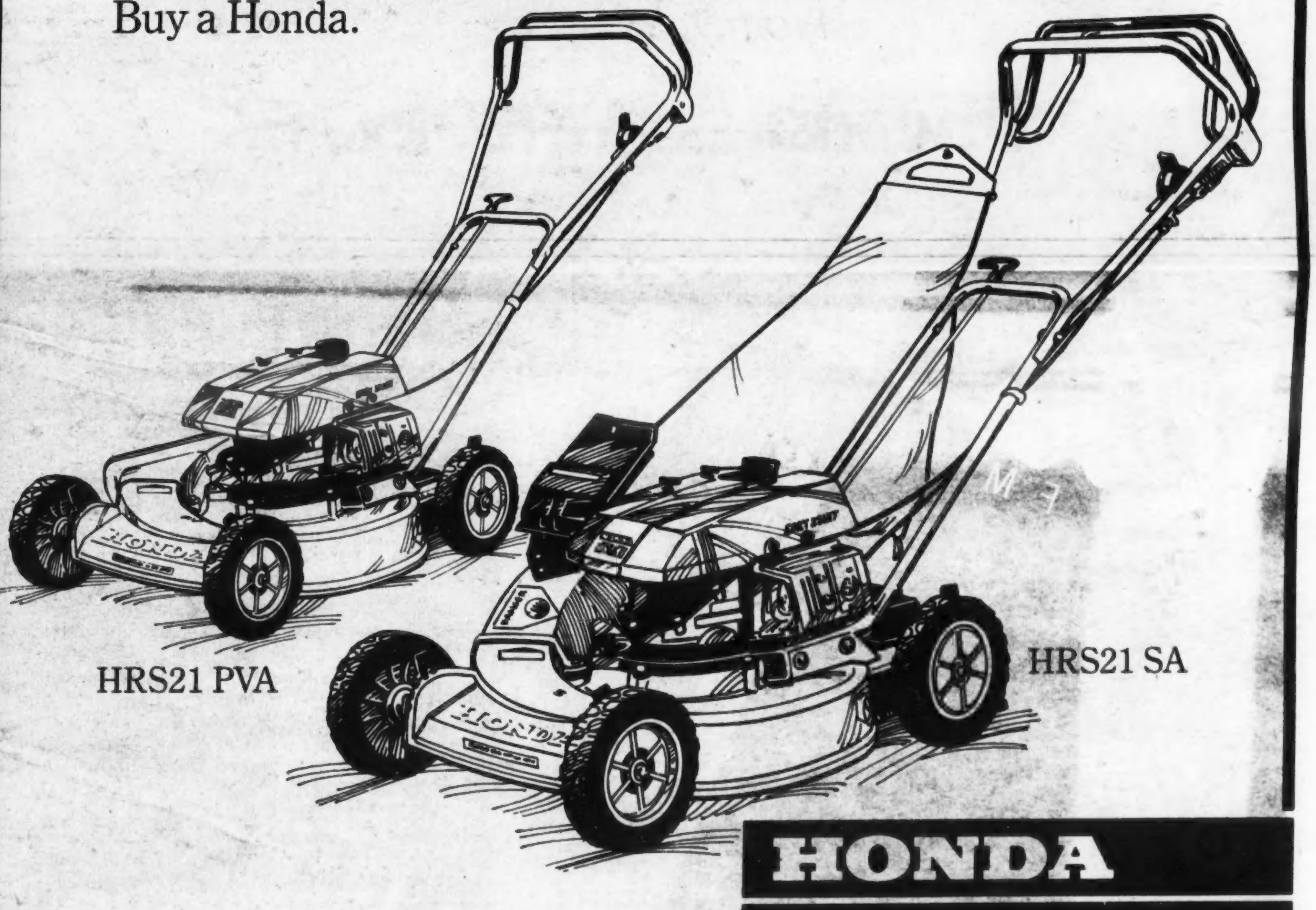

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Kiss

Jo Jo Kincaid
Nights, 9:00—1:00

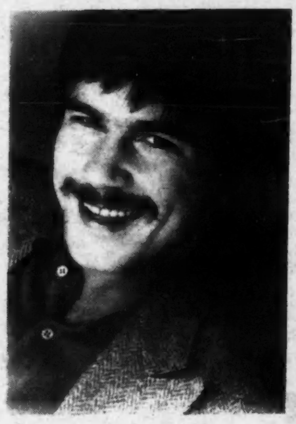
Jo Jo never had much time to think about what to do for a living while growing up in Gainesville, Florida. At 11 years old, he put the finishing touches on a radio transmitter in his house, hooked it up to his stereo, and began broadcasting Beatles tunes over a two block radius. Four years later, a few too many power improvements had been made and the FCC found him and shut him down.

But he went legitimate, worked a few stations down South, and finally left his home in Miami, hitting the outskirts of Boston just as the Blizzard of '78 was getting under way. It was worth the rugged landing, though. The history, culture, and educational awareness of the city blew him away. Turn on KISS-108 during his shift and he'll undoubtedly be screaming, "I'm *obsessed* with having a good time tonight!" Jo Jo explains that, "Excitement is contagious and the listeners pick up on my excitement."

There's a thoughtful, quiet side, too, that many fans probably aren't aware of. Personal studies of science and religion, as well as explorations in astral projection, have led him to understand that, "We're here for a purpose — to learn and to get along with each other by working things through."

Ed Mc Mann
Late Nights, 1:00—5:30

Ed remembers that he had sort of a rough start in the announcing business. "I was in Boston, working at my first on-air assignment, when the union found out I wasn't a card-carrying member and had me removed." He soon joined, but it took gigs as far west as San Francisco and far south as Miami before he returned to Boston and won the night spot at KISS-108.



His listeners are a larger group than one would think. Boston has a huge third shift made up of high tech people, security guards, hospital employees, and, of course, students. "The partying goes on all the time," says Ed., "a little slower at the beginning of the week, but it picks up toward the weekend. And a full moon approach gets people up and crazy!"

Other activities around the station include fill-in shifts for vacationing announcers and writing/producing all of the promotion and contest spots for KISS-108. If there's any free time left, he tries to split it between walks with Bear, his Old English Sheepdog, and enjoying total relaxation in a flotation tank.

"I love Boston," he says. "I grew up here and I'm familiar with this city and its changes. There's always something new happening."

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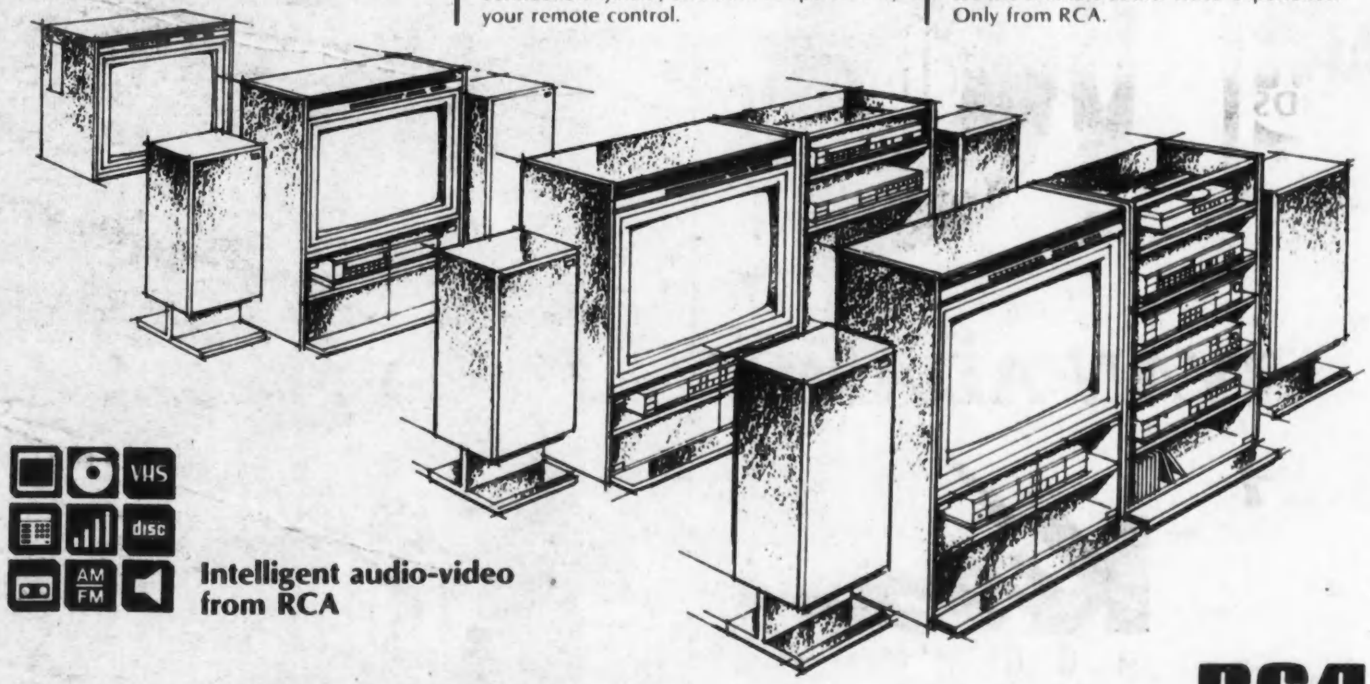

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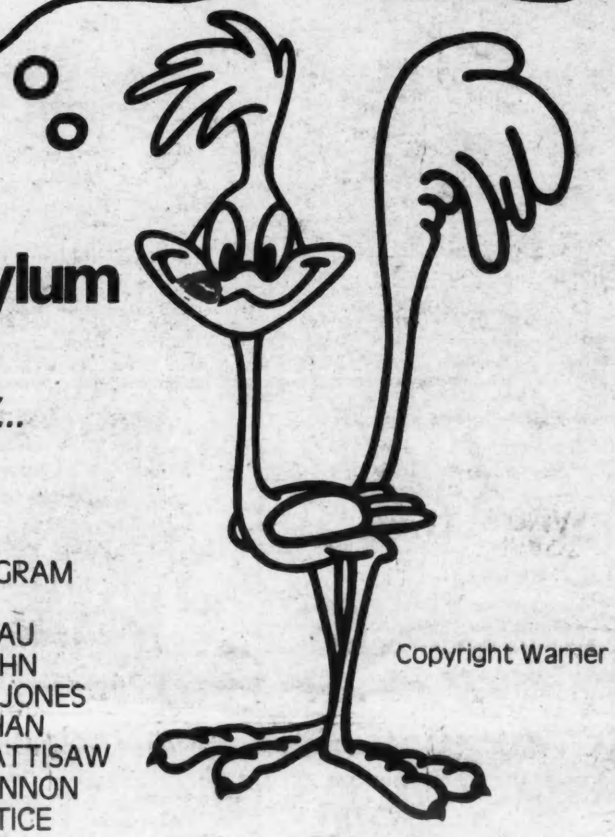

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Barnes

Continued from page 10

of his obsession he does make a case for himself as a practical critic who can sometimes shame the professionals, as surely as he reveals himself to be as engrossed as the PhD candidate rapt over a pair of Conrad's slippers. About "Un coeur simple" he says, "Imagine the technical difficulty of writing a story in which a badly stuffed bird with a ridiculous name ends up standing in for one third of the Trinity, and in which the intention is neither satirical, sentimental, nor blasphemous." Flaubert's niece Caroline, Braithwaite says, claims that near the end of his life the writer seemed to indicate to her that he regretted not having had a family, but that she hadn't pressed him, hadn't "troubled his thoughts" on this point. "I rather wish she *had* troubled his thoughts," Braithwaite says. He can fall into transparent invective in his all-consuming advocacy: defending Flaubert against those who find him insufficiently fond of his fellow man, he says, "You, clearly, are quite impressed by humanity; it's all clever irrigation schemes, missionary work and micro-electronics to you." But there's this sorrow to his arguments and fabrications and tricks. He loved his wife and she died. He loved his wife and he doubtless wanted a happy marriage he maybe didn't have. Now it all seems so desolate to him that he sometimes talks like a child. "I'm not sure what I believe about the past. I just want to know if fat people were fatter then. And were mad people madder?"

Barnes's book, a marvel of juxtaposition and arrangement, is finally a wealth of ideas about a wealth of topics. The burned-letters section is terrifically funny in a wry, urbane way, and even the barrage of Flaubert is so, well, zealous that it often avoids the weepy, if not the creepy. (Some of Braithwaite's loopier commentary reads like a *New Yorker* parody of criticism: "We should perhaps note at this point the four principal encounters between the novelist and a member of the parrot family" — sheesh.) People who have no interest in Flaubert may find some of it tiresome — which is unfortunate, since bearing with Braithwaite is the only way to the book's achievement. In this hot-housy world of books and bookpeople and scholars and exams, Barnes does prove that you can write about separation and incomprehension largely by writing about Flaubert. Braithwaite rejects wallowing in sadness and despair, but it's undeniable that massive grief informs the novel. "Books say: She did this because. Life says: She did this. Books are where things are explained to you; life is where things aren't." □

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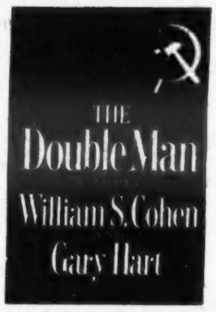

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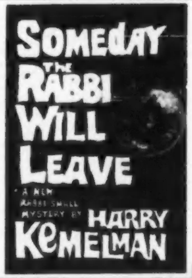

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